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ABSTRACT

To explore the role, responsibilities, and organizational relationships of a business administrator within the school district, six districts in the state of Washington were selected for examination. Semi-structured interviews were conducted along with observation of relevant documents to (1) describe the role and responsibilities of the business administrator; (2) examine the organizational structure of the district; and (3) explore the nature of the relationship of the noninstructional and instructional services. In this preliminary analysis, the report examines the relationships and interactions between the noninstructional and instructional units in the area of resource allocations and the related decision-making processes. Preliminary analysis suggests that a negotiated order exists that provides the process for resolution of the conflicts that arise from overlapping and ambiguous responsibilities and perspectives. The concept of the spheres of influence suggests a perspective for viewing the existing structure and encourages the development of a strategy for obtaining a negotiated order that reduces potential conflict and enhances the stability of the organization. (MLF)

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THE BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR AND THE NEGOTIATED ORDER

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The Business Administrator and the Negotiated Order

The central office administration of a school district has broad responsibility for the educational programs and business services of a school system. These programs and services generally encompass the instructional and noninstructional divisions of the system. The school system and the organization of the central office, therefore, may be examined through the points of view of several administrative positions.

Although business and administrative services are essential to the smooth operation of a school district, little research has focused on the problems unique to the business administrator and on business management as it relates to other organizational components of the district. This study examined the business administrator in the context of the organizational structure of public school central offices. Attention was focused on the business administration within the noninstructional and instructional units and the relationships and interactions which occur within this structure.

The school district can be viewed as a bifurcated organization which exists in a community context. One unit of the organization is generally recognized as the instructional side of a school district; the other as the noninstructional side (Charters, 1964). The instructional unit of the organization is concerned with the establishment, maintenance, and, sometimes, change of the core work of schools. The core work of schools is oriented toward providing educational experiences for children for purposes of enabling them to function as adults in society (Bidwell, 1965). The noninstructional side of school districts is concerned with the establishment, maintenance, and, sometimes, change of activities which are oriented toward supporting the core work of schools.

Organizations can be viewed as consisting of three levels: the institutional, the management, and the core (Thompson, 1967). Similarly, the school district system may be seen to consist of these levels. Within a school district, the central office corresponds to the institutional level; the school corresponds to the management level; and the classroom corresponds to the core. While any unit in a system may be viewed as possessing all three levels, the focus of this study was the institutional level, the central office.

Within the school system and the central office, there are typical administrative positions which serve as executives in the organization. The position of superintendent is generally viewed as the senior executive position associated with maintaining district-community relationships. Within the central office, the position of assistant superintendent for business is typically viewed as the senior executive concerned with the noninstructional activities of the district. Similarly, the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction is seen as the senior executive for the instructional unit of the district.

As with the district school system, the central office can be viewed as a bifurcated organization. The essential activities within the central office concern both instructional and noninstructional units or divisions. Both units are essential to the smooth operation of the organization and are closely connected (Charters, 1964; Fensch and Wilson, 1964). Although the instructional functions of school systems have been examined quite extensively, the noninstructional function, and particularly the position of business administrator, has received limited attention in the research concerning central office systems despite acknowledgement of the significance and influence of the position (Griffiths, 1966; Hill, 1982; Jordan, McKeown, Salmon, and Webb, 1985).

Studies of the formal and informal social systems in the central office have hinted at the processes through which the bifurcated activities are accomplished (Haught and McGivney, 1972; Rogers, 1968). Authors writing for practitioners admonish school administrators to attend to business matters as well as to instructional concerns and to encourage cooperation between instructional and noninstructional staff members (Clabaugh, 1966; Fensch and Wilson, 2964; Hill, 1982; Jordan, et al. 1985). However, little insight has been provided regarding the relationship between the organizational components and the means for achieving the recommended cooperation.

The Study

As limited research has focused on the problems unique to the business administrator and to business management, as it relates to other aspects of the central office, this study was undertaken to explore the role, responsibilities, and organizational relationships of a business administrator within the school

district. A qualitative research methodology, based on the concepts of Glaser and Strauss (1967), was selected for collection and analysis of data regarding the business administrator and the roles and relationships attached to the position. The field research consisted of several components. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants in the study. Observation and collection of relevant documents were other techniques utilized.

The objectives of the study were essentially threefold. First, the study described the character of the role and responsibilities of the business administrator. Second, the organizational structure of the district, including the noninstructional unit, was examined. Third, the nature of the relationship of the noninstructional and instructional services was explored. An overall purpose of the study was to develop an outline of a grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) relating to the linkage between the bifurcation of the district activities, specifically between the instructional and noninstructional functions of the organization.

This report represents preliminary analysis in the first phase of the larger study. As a result, the report is limited to the examination of the relationships and interactions between the noninstructional and instructional units in the arena of the allocation of resources, and the related decision making processes, within the organization.

The Situation

Six districts in the state of Washington were selected for examination in the study. The communities which comprised these districts can be characterized as small cities, suburban, and rather rural. Although two of the school districts were experiencing population growth, the others were stable or experiencing some decline in enrollment. The size of the districts ranged from 2500 to 9500, based on average annual student enrollment. Two districts included 15 separate schools, one had nine, two had eight, and one had six. The student enrollments in the individual schools varied widely as a result of growth or decline. However, the issue central to the study was the number of schools in operation which impacted operations such as maintenance, transportation, food service, personnel, and accounting, rather than issues of school or class sizes.

The business administrators in school districts play fundamentally important roles which are rarely seen by the public, students, and teachers. The significance of the position in school districts is apparent in the context of size and complication of operations.

School districts have budgets equivalent to many businesses. The annual operations and maintenance budgets for districts with student enrollments between 2500 and 9500 ranged from 9.8 million dollars (with a per pupil expenditure of $3,588.) to 34.4 million dollars (with a per pupil expenditure of $3,590). In 1986-1987, the largest district described above expended 1.3 million for food services; 1.2 million for transportation, and 4.2 million for facilities maintenance and operations.

The business office monitors budgets, personnel information, purchasing and accounting practices, and facilities management. All essential services outside the technical core come under the jurisdiction of the noninstructional management. Consequently, as one business administrator summarized, a business manager probably has "more information about what's going on" than any other person in the district. According to his admittedly somewhat prejudiced view, a "marginally prepared business manager can get you in trouble three times as fast as a marginally prepared curriculum director can."

The administrator for noninstructional services is generally responsible for managing the budget and monitoring expenditures of all units and schools within the system. Consequently, this administrator may be seen as having "deep pockets" when other areas in the system are seeking funding for routine or special requests. When the business administrators deny requests, they may be seen as insensitive to educational program and the needs of children. One business administrator expressed his perception that others may see the business office as "hardnosed, cold, and without consideration of what is happening in the field."

The business administrator must function in face of a dilemma. Scarce resources and the necessity for sound financial status and practices vye with seemingly limitless needs and requests for resources for maintaining and improving educational programs and instruction. Principals want added teachers, more books and materials, computers, field trips, and staff development, all of which are seen as necessary for improving schools and

student learning. Principals appear to expect the business administrator to be responsible for finding the resources to provide these solutions. A business administrator stated this perception, "When we say we don't have resources, it is easy for a principal to say, if it is good for kids it's up to you to find the resources!"

Job titles for business administrators vary; however, there is commonality among tasks and responsibilities. Those administrators with educational certification are more likely to be named assistant or associate superintendent than those without the certification. However, certificated individuals are also designated as director of employee and business services, and so on. (For purposes of consistency within this paper, the noninstructional administrator, including assistant and associate superintendents, and business managers) will be called business administrator.) Regardless of title, all business administrators report directly to the superintendents in their districts. Many of them, in turn, supervise heads of units who may be called coordinators, supervisors, lead workers, or directors of support services such as transportation, buildings and grounds, food service, and the business office.

Common tasks shared by business administrators include budget preparation and maintenance, purchasing, accounting, supervision of plant operations, and coordination of building and grounds work, transportation, and food service. Personnel responsibilities are sometimes included within the assigned tasks. Additional duties often include equity officer, hearings officer, and sometimes management's representative and negotiator with employee groups.

Generally, business administrators view themselves as the superintendent's "right hand" and emphasize the necessity of having the ability to understand the chief executive officer's values, expectations, and philosophy as they shape the goals and programs of the district. These values often impact the routines of the business administrator. One superintendent, for whom mole hills on the school grounds were considered a personal affront, would reschedule the operations and maintenance activities in order to mount an attack. Another's belief that learning does not occur effectively in a turbulent environment fundamentally influenced relationships between parents and school personnel.

Business administrators consistently expressed the view that the role of their division is to support the fundamental purpose of school systems--the education of children. This conviction was conveyed by one business administrator when he stated, "we try very, very hard to recognize we're a service organization and it's our goal to make educational programs go within the district. We are not here to strictly provide parameters. We try to provide support and help. . .and look toward ways to help principals accomplish what they want to accomplish."

Although business administrators do not supervise instructional personnel and program, most of those in the study were educators with teaching and administrative certification and experience. All six business administrators were college educated with many years of experience. Four had been teachers and principals before assignment to their current positions. The remaining two had undergraduate degrees in business and had been business administrators in their school districts for many years (13 years for one; 15 for the other). In their current positions, the range was from six years (for an administrator who had served the district for nine years as a principal) to 16; the average years in the current district was 11.3.

Narrative

Work routines for business administrators are marked by multiple role expectations, variety, and interruption. The routines are essentially determined by an annual cycle. In the September to August school year, this cycle includes several major phases: school board review of district goals, planning for supplemental funding levy elections (which may be annual or bi-annual depending upon board policy), the development of program improvement proposals, enrollment projections with attendant staffing allocations, union contract renewals, staff recruitment and selection, preparation and board approval of budget and priorities for program improvements, and implementation of program plans. Parallel to this planning calendar is the school-year calendar which included the beginning of the school year activities, quarter and semester instructional and grading time periods, planning processes including curriculum development, hiring of new or replacement staff, registration of students, budget and preparation of purchasing requests, and evaluation of existing staff/personnel.

The time of year, therefore, dictates the demands on the attention and time of administrators. These demands originate from schools and their needs for services, from financial concerns related to the budget cycle or the state annual reporting requirements, or the political necessity of passing a levy for supplemental funding for the school district.

Many of the business administrators begin their days with plans for their activities including reading of mail, returning telephone calls, and attending to other tasks. Rarely do they expect to complete their plan. On any particular day in the winter, mid-year for school districts, a business administrator typically would spend time reviewing current daily lunch counts to projecting enrollments for the following year and discussing with principals and other central office administrators the numbers of teachers needed according to those projections. An administrator might be asked for additional funding for a remediation program, prepare materials for a school board meeting, meet with a school board member to review the vouchers for paying the bills, sign purchase orders or requisitions, review accident reports, respond to promotional materials from a levy committee, meet with employee representatives regarding an alleged unfair labor practice, or attend any one of a number of meetings.

The business administrator generally is a member of district-level administrative councils or committees and the superintendent's cabinet. Easy and immediate access to the chief executive officer is available. In the context of the administrative council meetings, the business administrator may request information for preparation of the budget for the next year, report on the results of negotiations meetings with employee groups, ask for an evening work session for preparing telephone lists for the levy election, or request information regarding expenditures which can be postponed for a year to relieve a problem of "cash flow."

The business administrator, depending upon the size of the district, communicates with supervisors, principals, and other administrators throughout the district. Minimal communication occurs directly with teachers and parents. However, in the event of conflicts over decisions or unhappiness with a given state of affairs, both teachers and parents may vent their concerns directly to the business administrator. In one district, both an angry parent and the principal of an elementary school sought the business

administrator. The issue was head lice and the district practice of prohibiting students from attending school until there were no "nits" in the child's hair.

Informal communications occur between the business administrator, other administrators, and citizens. These conversations may occur at Kiwanis or Rotary, in the coffee shops, or grocery stores, as well as through routine district activities. Business administrators generally belong to some local service club and actively participate in community affairs.

Although many of the tasks of the business administrator are clearly within the sphere of the noninstructional unit, concerns frequently occur involving the instructional unit. Even the issue of "no nits" was of concern to both units. The instructional administrators were concerned equally with the student's absence from school as well as the potential for infesting other children. Issues of health and safety fell within the domain of the administrator in the noninstructional unit as well.

Other potential conflicts between noninstructional and instructional units occur in matters of availability and allocation of resources, which ultimately are financial. As one business administrator explained, his challenge was trying to "cover a two dollar hole with a one dollar bill."

As has been described, the roles of the business administrator may include consultant, manager, administrative council team member, office clerk, accountant/bookeeper, and district facilities inspector. Inspite of a commitment to supporting instruction, the roles do not generally include "instructional leader" and supervisor of principals or other certificated personnel.

Because of the significance of the finances in the district and the centrality of the business administrator responsibility, this arena received attention in the initial analysis of the role, relationships, and interactions of the business administrator.

The Conceptual Framework

The operations of the noninstructional and instructional units can be characterized as independent and autonomous in relation to some activities while interrelated and overlapping in others. This characterization can be better understood through the application of the "spheres of influence" concept developed by E. Mark Hanson (1985) in the Interacting Spheres Model.

Although Hanson used the model to describe the decision making concerns between principal and teachers in a school setting, the spheres of influence concept is useful in describing the assigned responsibilities and the relationships between the business administrator and the instructional and curriculum administrators in a school district.

The spheres of influence, according to Hanson (1985), have separate sources of power and priorities for decision making. Each sphere has a degree of autonomy and power, some decision making discretion, as well as the responsibility for the tasks and objectives which have been assigned or assumed. However, in organizations, many decision making concerns may be shared between divisions. This is particularly true in school districts in which organizational goals are ambiguous, job descriptions are not discrete, resources are limited, and rules for coordination are nonexistent or unclear. In the Interacting Spheres model, the overlapping area is called the contested zone. The persons in each sphere must develop means for operating within the contested zones. According to Hanson, the existence of the spheres of influence results in a degree of predictability within the system. This predictability helps to reduce tension and increase the stability of the organization.

As indicated, some method or means for resolving differences within the contested zone is necessary to reduce or minimize tension or potential conflict. Decision making and problem solving within the contested zone are fundamentally those concerns which pose conflict or tension. A process, therefore, must be developed which insures that all participants understand what must be done, when it must be done and who is responsible for doing it (Hanson, 1985). Strauss, et al. (1963) states that the resolution of conflict within the contested zone results in a "negotiated order" which enhances stability in the organization, at least for a time. The need for a negotiated order is greatest when the lines of responsibility or authority are not clearly drawn or generally accepted.

In the organization of a school district central office, broad spheres of influence generally exist according to the two main areas of concern which have been named--noninstructional and instructional, business operations and instruction. To some degree, there are "pockets of autonomy" (at least within the parameters established by law, school board policy, etc.) which

allow the units to operate independently of one another (Hanson, 1985). The planning of the repair of a school bus or the planning of the month's menu are the domain of persons within the business operations unit. Administrators concerned with instruction and curriculum may have little or no interest in either of those projects. Likewise, planning a master schedule for the high school may appear to be of minimal interest to the business administrator.

However, there are many areas of mutual concern and potential conflict which fall into the area of mixed jurisdiction, the contested zone. Key areas which are frequently found within the contested zone are budget planning and management, purchasing and accounting. There also may be some concerns which are fluid and, therefore, may on occasion fall within the contested area. For example, the development of a bus schedule will be in the domain of the business operations unit. However, if a schedule is proposed which changes the school starting time and impacts the curricular and instructional program, the decision may fall within the contested zone. A master schedule, which requires additional teachers, space, and equipment, also becomes a mutual concern and an area of potential conflict.

School districts are particularly characterized by the limitation of resources which are at the disposal of noninstructional and instructional administrators. Because of the centralization of state funding and accounting and the nature of the fixed costs of maintenance and operations, latitude in allocating funds is rather restrictive. There is little "slack" (March and Simon, 1958) in the system. According to March and Simon, limited resources result in interdependence among programs in an organization and increase the likelihood of competition between members and subgroups in the organization. Consequently, the need for joint decision making is increased.

In regard to resources of money, time, equipment, space, and so on, schools districts in the study typically had minimal "slack." Bookkeeping and budgeting practices adopted by districts allocate resources to schools and programs, frequently on a per pupil basis. District funds are budgeted for specific purposes and program uses. A small percentage of the budget could be considered "soft", estimated variously by some business administrators as two or three percent, or perhaps even five percent, of the total budget. However, it appeared that even though they were not substantial in terms of the total budgets, the significance of these resources was great. And indeed,

these resources could amount to several hundred thousand dollars. In the districts studied, use of the most conservative estimate of two percent would result in resources from $196,000 to $680,000 which, therefore, may be subject to negotiations for allocation.

Analysis

The concept of spheres of influence allows for analysis of the relationship between the two major divisions of a central office and among the administrators who have jurisdiction in those divisions. The contested zone has the potential for conflict and power struggles which can disrupt the operations of the school district. Recognition of the spheres of influence and the contested zone, and the issues inherent in each, can increase the administrator's understanding of the dynamics underlying the organizational structure. This understanding of the spheres then can provide the basis for the development of strategies for reducing potential conflict and for enhancing the smooth operations of the school district. A negotiated order exists as a result of the resolution of conflict within the contested zones.

Negotiations, according to Strauss, Schatzman, Ehrlich, Bucher, and Sabshin (1963), is patterned behavior which results in a division of labor. Negotiations is a "process of give-and-take, of diplomacy, of bargaining". The agreement may be explicit or implicit. The negotiations are also characterized as agreements or understandings which are temporal in nature, whether or not the time span is defined. These negotiations or agreements tend to occur in work contexts in which the individuals are expected to coordinate the work, but the rules of coordination are not, and/or cannot be, specified with precision.

The organizational structure of the districts studied is representative. The districts' organization follows tradition in that the school board is expected to establish policy, and the superintendent is expected to implement policy and supervise the district. The business administrator, instructional administrator, and principals are expected to fill other management roles in the district and are responsible for the functions within their respective units. Both business administrators and administrators for instruction report directly to the superintendents.

To some degree, the budget process, through planning and maintenance phases, becomes the foundation for all operations of the district, both instructionally and noninstructionally. In the development of the budget plan, all interest groups share in the desire to promote their programs and make improvements, which often translate into expansion of services and the addition of personnel. Although outside the scope of this paper, negotiations between these interest groups and the business administrator are fundamentally important in the planning process. The established goals of the district influence the budgeting process. However, once the budget has been established, it determines the implementation and delivery of program activities to a significant degree.

In a rational system as traditionally viewed (Callahan, 1962), the planning process, perhaps through the adoption of some specific planning, programming, and budgeting approach, would result in allocation of resources within the organization which would provide for the attainment of the established goals. School districts, however, do not function as rational systems, partially due to the uncertainty of the environment. Despite careful planning and adherence to recognized budgeting and accounting procedures, deviations from the plan occur. Deviations may result from organizational decisions or from circumstances outside the control of district administrators. The task of the business administrator is maintenance of the budget plan and making adjustments as necessary.

In the state of Washington, the budgeting process requires estimation of income, based on state formula for funding and any local revenues generated through special levy. Estimated expenditures are generally based on historical information regarding previous years' budget plans and line items of the final budgets. Negotiations for relatively limited resources occur essentially "in the margins." These become issues in the contested zone, where jurisdiction is shared and rules for establishing priorities or resolving conflicting demands are unclear. Some school districts have attempted to make these negotiations systematic, or at least to appear nonarbitrary, through development of "mini-grants" for which teachers may apply or through "program improvement proposals". Through these somewhat formal procedures, various interest groups have the opportunity to submit proposals and to compete for any available resources.

According to the philosophy of any given district, resources may be allocated to schools, to program areas under central office jurisdiction (i.e. staff development, building maintenance), or retained in a budget account controlled by the business administrator. The degree of centralization and decentralization of budget management varies depending upon the philosophy of school boards and superintendents, level of trust among administrators, and so on. Even when the resources are allocated to the schools, however, the business administrator may reserve authority to "recall" funds under certain conditions. The placement of the "slack" resources within the district organization determines the nature and location of negotiations.

In districts which function under a decentralized philosophy, resources are allocated to the schools. Then the "slack" often is found in the principals' budgets. In some districts in the study, curriculum and instruction resources are included in allocations to the schools. As a result, purchase of new textbooks and other items are at the discretion of the principals. District instructional administrators are dependent upon the principals' acceptance of their plans in order to make changes in curriculum or adopt textbook series. The instructional administrators prefer that they control a budget to facilitate the implementation of their programs. Because they do not have such control, they have to work through the principals and extend "carrots" to win them over. In one instance, although unable to control the object of expenditures, the instructional administrator could prohibit certain purchases. When a teacher asked to buy stickers, he could and did say no.

In another district, "slack" occurs in the budget of the district instructional administrator. While resources are budgeted for staff development and curriculum improvement, there is sufficient latitude in the planning for principals and teachers to seek funds from this administrator. Instructional staff, including principals and teachers, could circumvent the control of the business administrator by going to the instructional administrator. According to the business administrator, teachers and principals often found the instructional administrator to be an advocate "to try to get something" which was different from his role of having to "control things." Therefore, under those conditions, slack is more often found in the instructional unit than the noninstructional.

In many of the districts studied, however, the business administrators knew where "slack" existed even if they had not built any into their own budget items. Although essentially no resources are hidden, the business administrator must have the knowledge of any "slack" in the budget areas. In perceived and real emergencies, these resources can be made available. It is within this context that negotiations occur. For example, when high school administrators asked for help in sending a team to the state basketball tournament, unspent funds were available because the school board had not expended all resources earmarked for contracted services. Another business administrator indicated that he was willing to listen to the problems of the instructional staff and assist them if they "work with me, not fight me."

A variety of situations illustrate the exchanges, or agreements, which occur in the contested zone to achieve a negotiated order. Frequently, the exchange is implicit and the time frame indefinite. A mutual benefit usually results from the negotiations. The benefit may be tangible or intangible. "Support" may be the benefit sought by business administrators who view principals as providing an important base upon which to build faculty, and even parental, acceptance of ideas, programs, and decisions. As one business administrator stated, business administrators must not overlook the principals because they provide a power base.

On the part of the participating administrators, the medium of exchange is often good will and an implicit expectation for a return at some later time. This understanding results from previous practices or experiences. There is frequently an implicit understanding as described by a business administrator that "if you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours."

Although negotiations are most apparent and productive when there is mutual benefit, some negative examples reflect the attempt of the business administrator to wield power. In one school district a middle school principal wished to purchase a new copy machine. He had purchased a copy machine two or three years earlier which the business manager considered to be an inferior product. When the principal later wanted to replace the machine, the business administrator could have permitted the purchase to be charged to the district equipment budget or shared between budgets. The business administrator did allow the cost to be carried over three years, because the principal's budget could not handle the expense in a single year, but charged

the total expenditure against the school's budget. Implicit in the exchange is that the principal was being punished for his failure to follow the established process.

In another district, an elementary principal was noted for his inability to manage his budget or his inattention to the matter. He frequently spent his budget and expected the business office, instructional administrator, or superintendent to rescue him. He generally found they did assist him. The business administrator's concern was that the principal would never learn if he did not "hurt." Other principals were unsympathetic as their budgets could be adversely affected by his over expenditures. In a previous year, cash flow problems resulted in a need for a "slow down" on expenditures. The high school administrators cooperated and spent only seventy-five percent of their budget. Consequently, when they had needs arise in a subsequent year, the business administrator was willing to assist them in the purchase of furniture. They had won his good will and an implicit "promise" to provide a benefit when possible. In effect, these negotiations were multi-year.

In situations in which the "slack" resources are allocated to the schools, the business administrator may be forced to recall funds. This may occur through a freezing of budget expenditures, screening of purchases, or requesting delays in buying. In a district which experienced an enrollment short fall as well as an unanticipated reduction in tax base, decreasing revenue by approximately $300,000, the last approach was taken. Rather than cutting budgets and recalling unspent funds, the business administrator requested that principals who were planning to make large purchases the following year, notify him of the amounts. If sufficient expenditures could be delayed, there would be minimal inconvenience or disruption to instructional or operational programs.

As can be seen, a negotiated order exists as a result of the agreements which are reached between the participants whose roles and tasks are caught in overlapping spheres, the contested zone. In a school district, concerns which may be subject to negotiations include resources of time, personnel, space, and money. Under conditions of scarce resources, there are not clear rules for allocation of those resources. Although the school board sets overall budget parameters and priorities for district goals and program improvements, in the wake of unforeseen circumstances, such as increased or decreased

enrollments or other loss of revenue, the resolution often falls into the contested zone and requires coordination of efforts (Charters, 1964) or negotiations (Strauss, et al. 1963).

The negotations occur in multiple settings, including committee meetings, administrative council meetings, or informal conversations or interaction between individuals. Negotiations imply reaching an agreement which provides mutual benefit. Sometimes the agreement is more implicit than others, and the exchange may be a tangible for an intangible. For example, good will may be exchanged for permission to purchase an item. Public relations and rewards for student achievement may be offered as exchange for the price of travel and lodging. A purchase may be delayed with the expectation that good will and trust will be earned, and an implicit promise that a reward will be forthcoming.

Conclusions

The business administrator occupies a unique role in school districts, serving an essential, and sometimes powerful role, while operating somewhat on the periphery of instructional and curriculum concerns. The administrator in this role must develop the ability to manage his sphere of influence and to operate successfully within the contested zone.

The study reveals the diverse roles and responsibilities of the business administrator who coordinates noninstructional activities of the school district and monitors distribution of district resources. In the district organizational structure, the business administrator is subordinate to the superintendent. The superintendent, however, generally designates the business administrator as the officer responsible for financial, facility, and business operations.

School districts are frequently characterized as rational systems which operate according to a rational model (Hanson, 1985). Despite this characterization, the preliminary analysis of the field data suggests that a negotiated order exists which provides the process for resolution of the conflicts which arise from overlapping and ambiguous responsibilities and perspectives. Instructional and noninstructional staff negotiate, through formal and, more often, through informal give and take, to ensure smooth operation of the district. The negotiation, as an exchange process, occurs in

administrative council settings, in one-to-one discussions, and during informal and somewhat spontaneous encounters.

Significance of the Study

This study has theoretical, substantive, and practical significance. On the theoretical level, the results of the study increase understanding of how work is coordinated between different units within an organization. This study offers the administrator a means for analyzing and understanding the interrelationship between the major spheres of influence which exist in an organization. The concept of the spheres of influence, with the contested zone, suggests a perspective for viewing the existing structure and encourages the development of a strategy for obtaining a negotiated order which reduces potential conflict and enhances the stability of the organization. At the substantive level, the study describes the business administrator position within school districts by providing a profile of the roles and responsibilities. On a practical level, the study provides insights useful in the training of business administrators for coordination of different structures and tasks through negotiated order. Additional in-depth observation and interview, and analysis, is necessary to develop further conclusions regarding the interrelationships of the district's instructional and noninstructional divisions.

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